

## The Missing Gap

In recent months, says Senator Stuart Symington writing in The Reporter magazine, what was once described as the "missile gap" appears to have been done away with once and for all. He goes on to describe the phenomenon of its disappearance with these words:

"Not only is there no gap, we are informed by the press, but there never was one, and those who said there was were guilty at best of hallucination and at worst of something like bad faith."

The Democratic Senator from Missouri once was Secretary of the Air Force, and he knows a thing or two about what is going on in the nation's defense establishment.

Does he believe the missile gap has disappeared? That it never existed? That those who warned about the gap were foolish or spoke falsely?

Mr. Symington's answer is "no" to all such questions.

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The gap was "invented," if that is the word, when our nation's estimates of Soviet missile strength were compared with America's known missile strength.

Mr. Symington said he had a part in making those comparisons. He took the matter up with Allen Dulles of the CIA, and Mr. Dulles' analysis "showed that there was to be a substantial and growing missile gap." Mr. Symington was convinced that Washington then was under-rating Soviet missile development, and so reported to President Eisenhower.

Nothing more was said officially about the missile gap until early 1960 when Defense Secretary Gates announced new ground rules for interpreting intelligence reports about Soviet missile strength. Instead of dealing with "the theoretical Soviet capability," said Mr. Gates, the new estimates would be based on "what the Soviet Union will do."

Thus, merely by changing the basis of estimates from "capability" to "probability," notes Senator Symington, "we immediately made an immense and costless advance in the missile race—without actually

Candidate Kennedy refused to go along with this hanky-panky, and, according to Mr. Symington, warned about the missile gap in at least nine campaign speeches. Now, however, Mr. Kennedy and his Administration are doing precisely what Mr. Eisenhower and his officials did. So, in Mr. Symington's words:

"If the gap has been eliminated, it has been largely a result of the downward revision of our estimates of the Soviet Union's missile strength."

In this area the ordinary American has very little information, and must rely upon what he is told by his officials.

Thus if it is true that the "missile gap" has been manipulated for political purposes, the whole body of American opinion about the defense program has been poisoned and the program itself may have been built upon sand. Guessing and manipulation of that sort could very well prove to be the world's most dangerous game.